

Ebola virus disease



Ebola virus disease is caused by an Ebola virus, of which there are five species. Ebola virus disease is also known as Ebola, and was previously called Ebola haemorrhagic fever.

Ebola virus disease is a type of viral haemorrhagic fever (VHF), which are life threatening infections whose symptoms can include fever and bleeding.

A large outbreak of Ebola virus disease occurred in 2013-2015 in West Africa, particularly in Guinea, Liberia and Sierra Leone, and with limited numbers of cases in other countries. Prior to this outbreaks of Ebola virus disease in humans have occurred only in Africa, specifically in the Democratic Republic of Congo, Gabon, the Sudan, South Sudan and Uganda.

No one has contracted Ebola virus disease in Australia.



Ebola virus disease is a notifiable condition¹

How Ebola virus disease is spread

Many VHF viruses are found naturally amongst wild animals, such as bats, rodents (for example, rats and mice), monkeys and apes. Occasionally these viruses break through into the human population and cause outbreaks, then usually disappear for many years.

The natural animal host of Ebola virus is unknown. It is likely the first patient in a cluster or outbreak becomes infected with Ebola virus through contact with an infected animal.

Ebola virus disease can be transmitted from person to person via:

- > contact with blood or body fluids (for example, urine, saliva, faeces and vomit) from an infected person (living or deceased)
- > contact with an area contaminated with blood or body fluids of an infected person
- > sexual transmission.

Signs and symptoms

Initial symptoms are flu-like and may include:

- > sudden onset of fever
- > muscle aches and pains
- > tiredness
- > headaches.

Illness then progresses with symptoms such as:

- > diarrhoea and vomiting
- > headaches and confusion
- > rash
- > sore throat and cough
- > extreme tiredness and collapse.

Some people go on to develop bleeding problems, multi-organ failure and death. Bleeding problems may include bleeding from the nose or gums, vomiting or coughing blood, bruising, rashes and internal bleeding.

The death rate of Ebola virus disease depends on the species. For Zaire species of Ebola virus it is estimated to be between 50% and 90%.

Diagnosis

Cases are diagnosed by PCR on a blood specimen.

Ebola virus disease



Incubation period

(time between becoming infected and developing symptoms)

From 2 to 21 days, most commonly 8 to 10 days.

Infectious period

(time during which an infected person can infect others)

People are not infectious until the onset of symptoms. People are infectious as long as blood and secretions contain virus.

Treatment

People with any symptoms of Ebola virus disease who have been in contact with someone with Ebola virus disease (or their blood or body fluids) should go to a hospital, preferably by ambulance, (and tell the ambulance and hospital staff of their exposure) to get treatment and avoid spreading the disease to others.

Prevention

- > Individuals with suspected or confirmed Ebola virus disease need to be isolated and excluded from childcare, preschool, school and work until cleared to return by a doctor
- > health care workers who care for a patient with suspected or confirmed Ebola virus disease should use hand hygiene and appropriate personal protective equipment

- > for at least several months after recovery and until advised otherwise by a doctor, males who have had Ebola virus disease should use a condom when engaging in sexual intercourse
- > those who visit an area where Ebola virus disease occurs should not eat raw or undercooked 'bush meat' including ape, monkey or bat.
- > People should not have contact with (or eat) blood, meat or body fluids of animals which show signs of Ebola virus disease.

Useful links

SA Health website – www.sahealth.sa.gov.au

- > Avoiding sexually transmitted infections
- > Exclusion periods from childcare, preschool, school and work
- > Overseas travel
- > Viral haemorrhagic fevers
- > When you have a notifiable condition

1 In South Australia the law requires doctors and laboratories to report some infections or diseases to SA Health. These infections or diseases are commonly referred to as 'notifiable conditions'.

You've Got What? 5th Edition

Communicable Disease Control Branch

Telephone: 1300 232 272 Email: HealthCommunicableDiseases@sa.gov.au

The SA Health Disclaimer for this resource is located at www.sahealth.sa.gov.au/youvegotwhat



This document has been reviewed and endorsed by SQCAG* for consumers and the community FEBRUARY 2016.

Public-I3-A1

© Department for Health and Ageing, Government of South Australia. All rights reserved. FIS: 15127.1. Version 1. February 2016.

*SA Health Safety and Quality Community Advisory Group



www.ausgoal.gov.au/creative-commons



Interpreter



Government
of South Australia

SA Health